

*Commissioner's Report
Stephen L. Pruitt
December 7, 2016 KBE Meeting*

Updates from KSB and KSD

Relative to both schools, KDE staff continues to work on policies and procedures for personnel, communication, residential admissions and school admission related to both KSB and KSD. The policies will be ready for KBE to review in April. To prepare, staff is researching online, as well as consulting other state schools for assistance. Likewise, staff visited both schools to assess the technology infrastructure needs. As a result, the infrastructures have been updated through the addition of laptops, iPads and Braille readers, all paid for using IDEA funds.

Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB)

This month we celebrated many successes at KSB. Some of the highlights include: two students inducted into the National Honor Society and one student application to the Governor's Scholars Program. The book, "I Can Hear Just Fine," co-authored by KSB students last year, was released at the end of October; the community celebrated with a book signing.

Dr. Burger, KSB's dorm supervisor, is working on setting up the independent dorms to be more "home-like" and less "institutionalized." These efforts will help the students with generalizing to independent living. As part of this process, students earn the privilege to live in an apartment-like setting through a variety of criteria including passing several safety tests. The apartments are housed within the dorm, so the students are safe, yet live independently.

There are currently four personnel openings: a principal, social studies teacher, assistive technology teacher and guidance counselor. A library/media specialist and two instructional assistants have been offered positions. Tristan Parsons continues working hard as the interim principal. The community, school staff and students find him very personable and effective.

Meanwhile, the corrective action plan deadlines are being met. All staff are serving on committees to develop a school-wide behavioral system with the Academic Behavioral Response to Intervention (ABRI) team from the University of Louisville. Similarly, teachers are consistently meeting goals related to students' learning targets through a variety of measures, including posting standards and student-friendly "I can" statements.

Plans also are being made for the future. The radio station will be up and running again next year, through a podcast. This initiative will help fuel other CTE programs as podcasting can lead to marketing strategies, home business solutions and more. This plan was made possible by a 16-year-old student who received an award from ATT for \$5,000 to fund the station.

Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD)

The high school and middle school choir performed on October 27 in Lexington, at the Hilton, for an International Conference for Interpreters for the Deaf. Similarly, the elementary students attended a program at Eastern Kentucky University called "Toying with Science."

There are currently several positions posted for KSD: an assistant director of special education, assistant principal, director of outreach services, outreach consultant, interpreter supervisor, school psychologist, student development associate and middle school English/language arts teacher. Additionally, a social worker, nurse and psychologist have been hired.

Meanwhile, the corrective action plan deadlines are being met. Instruction and communications also are being improved using Eastern Kentucky University practicum students and offering students American Sign Language classes daily. In addition, Kathy Cox (formally of the Education Delivery Institute and previously the superintendent of the state schools in Georgia) is working with KSD administration to develop a strategic plan to address: instruction, mental health, safety, IDEA compliance and culture. These services are being implemented through a multi-tiered system of services (MTSS).

Final Accountability Regulations Issued by USED

This week, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) issued the final accountability regulations. As we and many individual states requested, the final regulations delay the timeline for identification of underperforming schools until the 2018-19 school year, using 2017-18 data. States can still choose to identify schools in 2017-18 if they are ready. The regulations also allow the state to use adjusted cohort graduation rate data from the year immediately prior to the preceding school year for identification of Comprehensive Support Schools.

Some of the changes that were made due to our request and those of others are:

- delay the timeline for identification of underperforming schools until the 2018-19 school year, using 2017-18 data; states can still choose to identify schools in 2017-18 if they are ready; allow the state to use adjusted cohort graduation rate data from the year immediately prior to the preceding school year for identification of Comprehensive Support Schools
- identify schools as Comprehensive Support or Targeted Support Schools, but do not require additional school-level summative ratings
- use 4-year graduation rate data for identification of schools, but allow states to use a different methodology for schools that are designed to serve special populations (including schools serving students in alternative educational settings and schools designed for recently arrived English learners).
- make school improvement grant awards to Comprehensive Support Schools that are less than \$500,000 and Targeted Support Schools that are less than \$50,000 if they determine that a lesser amount is sufficient to support effective implementation of the school improvement plans.
- make certain changes that streamline some requirements in consolidated state plans. The final rules change certain previously required descriptions into either an optional description or an assurance, and remove certain previously required descriptions entirely. Also, each SEA would have to describe performance management systems only once instead of under each required component of the plan.

The final regulations also relax the timeline states have for submitting their plans by allowing states to choose from two submission dates – April 3, 2017 or Sept. 18, 2017, which will allow Kentucky additional time to develop its plan.

For a comprehensive description of the U.S. Department of Education’s final regulations, read a summary of the rules [here](#), or the full Notice of Final Regulations [here](#).

For a high-level explanation of the requirements and timeline for identification of schools for support and improvement under the ESSA, [view the chart here](#).

Work on Accountability Model Moving Forward

The Systems Integration Work Group met Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 in Frankfort to discuss recommendations for Kentucky’s new accountability system. The Systems Integration Work Group is taking all of the recommendations from the individual work groups and developing them into a coherent accountability system, which it is scheduled to be presented to the Accountability Steering Committee on Jan. 9-10, 2017.

The Accountability Steering Committee will in turn make recommendations on the overall system to me as commissioner. I will then bring recommendations to you for approval of changes in the accountability system.